



Born to Win

About the New Covenant

by Ronald L. Dart

What did the first Christians believe about the New Covenant? I'm talking about those Christians who were alive in the days when the New Testament was being written—when they could actually ask the apostles questions; when some of them had actually seen Jesus (or had at least talked to people who *did* see Jesus and heard him talk). These were *heady days* for those folks.

It does seem to me, in the discussions I've heard over the years about the Old and New Covenants, there's something about them I think very few people seem to have understood. But before I can go into *that* question, I have to lay a little background. Several years ago, I attended a workshop presented by a psychologist. And it shook me up a little bit. He said that the human mind is like a closet you can never clean out. Everything you hear, everything you see, everything you smell, everything you experience through the senses, and everything you create by *thought* goes into your mind and stays there... forever.

Now, I believe that; you never really lose anything. When you forget something, you have temporarily lost the ability to access it. But any number of things—a sound, a word, a smell—can recall it in *a snap*. It is kind of troubling because there are not a few things we would like to forget; we just can't.

Now, let me give you an illustration of what I'm talking about. Imagine a virtual room covered with cubby-holes from top to bottom, side to side, all four walls. Now, if you sit down to watch a movie, you will fill a number of those cubby-holes with the story and the events of the movie. Some of the events will make a deeper impression than others and will have a dominant place. (Let's say they will be at eye level.) Other events will be up against the ceiling and out of reach. Sex and violence tend to print more deeply, and can often be troubling (depending on how powerfully they're presented). I still recall that scene from *The Godfather* where a dead horse's head turns up in somebody's bed. *Man*, that was shocking—the way they presented that thing. And it's just there, and it won't go away.

Now, the human mind is designed in such a way that it has to create meaning out of all the junk we put in there. *Nothing* can remain meaningless. I'm going to repeat that; we've got to understand this. Nothing can remain meaningless. This is what Viktor Frankl calls "the drive to meaning".

So, while we sleep, our mind runs through all this stuff and does some sorting and rearranging. It attempts to find relationships and to assign *meanings* to events that take place. The brain runs down all the corridors and looks and all the cubby-holes. We're sleeping (hopefully not snoring), and we're dead to the world. But, still, we are aware of this. And the weird thing is that the body has a little fluid or chemical that it puts into us while we're doing this that *paralyzes* us. And that's what keeps us from walking, or hurting ourselves, and so forth while all this is going on. You can sometimes watch your dog sleeping and you realize it's going on in the dog's brain, as well.

Okay. The brain finds things that are troubling you the most and attempts to deal with them. It takes a *terribly violent* act that you witnessed and determines first if it was real or imagined. I think of the guy who said, "There have been an awful lot of *bad* things in my life. Most of which never happened." But anyway, it tries to deal with these. It will try to straighten them out. It relates it to other events you have experienced *and* to other facts that you know. Hypnotism is sometimes used to recall events, but it's an

unreliable method in that hypnotism does not always cause you to discern between what is *real* and what is imagination. Because, in our lifetime, we have created who knows how many imaginary scenes that never did take place.

Now, out of all this jumble of junk (we've got a room full of this stuff) the mind creates *meaning*. When we're sleeping, it's working. But that meaning is not always right; that meaning is not always healthy. It can sometimes create mental illness in the form of neuroses. A classic example of this is what I call... (no, I didn't call it that. I forget what psychologist did)... calls it the "double bind".

Take two authority figures: the Bible and, say, the apostolic leader of a church who is said to be infallible. Now, you may find the Bible says one thing; the apostle says something quite different. Both are infallible in *your* eyes. That creates a double bind. Now, it's easily cured if we can just decide which authority to follow. But if our system requires that *both* be right, then our mind has to make sense out of something that *doesn't make sense*.

What do we usually conclude when we come up against a double bind? I've seen it in practice, and I really appreciated it when I finally found somebody they explained it. But what happens is, when we can't make our decision between those two, we conclude: There must be something wrong with *me*. Because I can't see this. Or we lie to ourselves and *pretend* we can see what we *don't*. We tell ourselves that, if we'll be patient, we will finally see it. Our subconscious mind, doing its best, rearranges all the wires in our minds so we can find meaning in the meaninglessness. And when we are wired wrong, we make bad decisions and we become confused.

Now, I've had occasion (being in the field I'm in) to counsel with people from religious traditions that have created that double bind. And I noticed something as we were going along in several of those congregations: The most common phrase I hear is, "I'm confused." Their leadership tells them, "Just be patient and you will come to see it." I've got news for you: The devil will tell you exactly the same thing. It's sort of like Groucho Marx's example of the woman who finds her husband in a closet at a party with another woman—lipstick all over his face. And he says, "Who are you going to believe—*me* or your own eyes?"

The normal response of a sane mind in the presence of a lie is confusion. What's the way out of the confusion? Simple: Call it *a lie*. Recognize that you are being *lied to* by *a liar*. Say it out loud. You can say it in the privacy of your own home. Say it out loud. "That's a lie." Interestingly, when you do it—when you *finally* bring yourself to do that—confusion will melt away and *meaning* will start to return.

Now, the odd thing about all this is that a man named Moses, in his *last* sermon to the children of Israel before they entered the promised land, handed them the answer to this question. You'll find this in Deuteronomy, chapter six. He said:

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

¹ Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it:

² That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.

That often gets overlooked. People think, "Well, God gave Israel law", and they never give a second thought, really, to *why*. Did they think it was for *God's* benefit? Of course not; it was for *their* benefit.

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you, and that you may

increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey.

And then he says this:

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

⁵ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

⁶ And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart:

They are to have a prominent position in that closet you can never clean out—your mind. Now, if you've been following me on this, you may already be ahead of me in realizing: "Oh, I see. The Law gives you a framework in which the events, the circumstances that you go through in life, can be placed. It makes it easier to know where you're at. It makes it easier to know whether this is a good thing to do or a bad thing to do." He goes on, verse seven:

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

⁷ And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸ And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ And you shall write them on the posts of your house, and on your gates.

Now, what effect does this have on how your mind develops *meaning*? Well, it develops *deep grooves*. When you're talking about this when you get up and when you lie down at night; if you're talking about it at the dinner table; you're talking about it with your son as you're walking along the road outside; you are laying in place memories, a framework, a set of standards—a *worldview*, if you will—into which everything that happens has meaning. It develops *deep grooves*—prominent ideas that give you a worldview that is just not shared by an awful lot of people.

"Write them on your doorposts", he said. You know, I wonder, if you perchance have the Ten Commandments on the wall of your house somewhere. Years ago, someone gave me a plaque (*nice-looking* plaque) with the Ten Commandments. So I put it up on the wall. I no longer notice it. I know where it is. I can walk to the house and walk right over to it and read it. But I don't even notice it. It's a phenomenon of human nature that we do not notice what is always there. We notice what is *new*. We notice what is *changed*.

I was once invited to speak to the seniors at a school called The Master's School [see *A Framework for the Future*]. They gave us a tour of the place. And *every* time we turned around, it seems, we encountered a scripture on a wall somewhere. They were in calligraphy, they were in artwork, they were printed out on long printer paper. Most of them were obviously *changed* regularly, and the scriptures were applicable to what was going on *in the school*—right then, now, current. And they changed them, *regularly*. I don't think anything stayed up for over a week.

You know, the equivalent of doorposts (as they put it back then) in our houses is the refrigerator door. We have these magnets and we stick things on the refrigerator with a magnet. But if you have kids in the house, you really ought to have visuals around that change frequently. All these visuals—be they pictures or scriptures—go into that closet, and they will stay in that kid's mind *forever*. And when a bad

experience goes into that closet, the things you have *taught* them will be there to make sense out of the things that come rolling in out of season—to attach the *right* meaning to the events instead of the *wrong* meaning. You are giving the kids an absolute that will tend to support mental health.

It's staggering, when you think about it. And it's as *logical* as sunrise/sunset, when you think about it. Be *very careful* not to ever give your kids a double bind—where they have to figure out whether Mommy or Daddy is lying to them. And he goes on to say it again:

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

⁷ And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

This is crucial. And it's a lot more than some little block, in which you have a rolled scroll of commandments, that you tie to your wrist as some Jews do. It's *more* than that. You've got to *talk* about it. It's got to be something that registers on the mind and *stays* there. *Repetition* prints these things more prominently in the mind, especially repetition with variation. These things are in the cubby-holes at eye level in your little room, and they *dominate* a lot of the other stuff.

You know, if you really want a good example of this... If you happen to be a person who has watched the *Star Trek* series—or you know somebody who has (we call ourselves, sometimes, “Trekkies”)—they'll tell you the characters, the stories, the plotlines. They register on this, and they're in there, and they will be there forever. Hopefully, we've got something *firm* we can use to gather meaning from them.

The fact is that Americans (and others) have *shamefully* neglected this commandment, and we have created a problem that we cannot solve in less than a generation. And we won't solve it *then*, unless we go to work on it right now. And Christian churches have been just as shamefully neglectful of this as anybody has been. If you want to understand what's gone wrong with us, it is simple: We have not taught our children that *God* is the ultimate authority. Who do *your* children see as the ultimate authority? The government? The school? Perhaps the church? You? Oh well, the church is a *good* authority, right? No, not necessarily.

Consider a church that teaches the Law of God as an *external* authority which the church is obliged to *enforce*. (I think the Catholic Church is less inclined this direction than it was at one time in its history, but they've been there.) You could easily have a generation of kids who grow up *hating* the church *and* the Law of God. And when their generation becomes influential, they will try to get rid of the things they hated when they were kids. The Catholic Church, to some degree, may be experiencing that now. And for all I know, the church you attend may.

If the churches continue to ignore the Law of God in teaching their children, the church—*that* church—is headed toward the graveyard of history. The problem of evangelism in today's church is they have not even been replacing their losses. Losses? Yeah, losses: the people who die and the children who leave. Because the number of children who leave is probably greater than the ones who stay. There was a time when Christian churches grew rapidly. They still do in places in the world. Take Africa as an example. But in the Western world, we've been treading water for the last generation. And, frankly, we have less and less of a reason to even exist.

Here is the task before us: While we evangelize our communities we must also evangelize our children. The churches will grow if we do more than these two things: evangelize our children and stand as a light in the community for what is right in God's eyes. Our children must be taught from their earliest years to love God, to love Jesus, and (this may stick in the craw of a lot of Christian people) they've got to be taught to love the Law of God. They must be taught that the church is not the ultimate authority; God is. And I'm not going to go down this road today, but they also need to learn that the Bible is not

the ultimate authority; *God is*. For the Bible points to God, and is about God, and he *is* the authority. Children must be taught that the Law of God is nothing more than an expression of the *character* of God as it applies in a given circumstance and time. They must not be taught that they are serving the God of their parents or their parents' church. They must be taught to develop a *personal relationship* with God. They must be taught the Law of God, not as an *external* authority over their lives, but as an *internal* authority *in* their lives.

And, you see, this is the very *point* of the New Covenant. Paul wrote this (I think it was Paul) in Hebrews chapter eight, verse six:

Hebrews 8

AKJV

⁶ But now has he [*Jesus*] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

⁸ For finding fault with them, he said, Behold, the days come, said the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

You see, the Pharisees in Jesus' day did look upon the Law as an external authority over their lives. What Jesus wanted the Law to become was the *internal* authority. In verse nine, he says:

Hebrews 8

AKJV

⁸ [...] I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, said the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; [...]

Now, listen carefully.

Hebrews 8

AKJV

¹⁰ [...] I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people[.]

You know, this is completely counter to the asinine argument that the passing of the Old Covenant meant a passing of the Law. It was not the Law that changed; it was the *locus of control*. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that the Law is no longer an *external* authority; it is an *internal* authority. It is in your mind. It's in your heart. It gives meaning to life. It gives you a framework that you can use to direct and understand all the information that comes your way. It is not the government, be it state or church, that decides how you must obey the Law; it is *you* who must decide. It is not the church or government that must enforce the Law in your life; it's *you*. Under the Israelite covenant, the political structure of the nation had the authority to enforce the Law of God. The New Covenant conveys no such authority.

Now, I think there has been a presumption that this writing of the Law in your heart is a spiritual thing, that takes place with no effort on our part. I don't think so. God is not miraculously going to put something into your mind and your heart without *you* doing something about it.

Now, if you *really* want to understand this: take your Bible; get yourself a nice hot cup of coffee, a comfortable chair; turn to the 119th psalm; and just read through this *long* psalm, listening to what this chap is trying to say. Because it is one of the most *profound* statements you'll ever find anywhere about establishing a basis—a foundation—for a worldview, for a way of looking at the world, for putting stuff into that closet that you can never clean out, which will help you keep it organized and clean. Take for example Psalm 119, verse nine:

Psalm 119

AKJV

⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to your word.

King James English is a little bit awkward. (I personally like it.) But what he's saying is, "How on earth am I going to clean up my life? I know, by paying attention to what I'm doing in the light of the Bible!" How hard is that?

Psalm 119

AKJV

¹⁰ With my whole heart have I sought you: O let me not wander from your commandments.

¹¹ Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

And you do realize that's nothing more than simple memorization and implanting in the mind by repetition. I am often surprised by how much Scripture I can cite, not having made any conscious effort to memorize it. It's just that I have spoken the words *so many times* (in sermons, radio broadcasts, and you name it) that when I face situations in life where there are questions that arise, an awful lot of the time some scripture pops into my mind that God has told us a long time ago how to handle situations like that. In verse 12, he said:

Psalm 119

AKJV

¹² Blessed are you, O LORD: teach me your statutes.

¹³ With my lips have I declared all the judgments of your mouth.

Now, notice this is not something that merely goes on in the mind; it is a matter of the lips. Second, the word "declared" [*sâphar*, סָפַר, Strong's H5608] means in Hebrew "to score with a mark", like you would do with a tally or a record. "I have checked them off—tallied them—with my lips."

Psalm 119

AKJV

¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate in your precepts, and have respect to your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight myself in your statutes: I will not forget your word.

The synonyms for "law" in the first two stanzas of this psalm are fascinating. They are these: "*your word*", "*your testimonies*", "*your precepts*", "*your ways*", "*your statutes*", "*your commandments*", "*your judgments*". There are seven of them just right there. This is fascinating to watch, because what he is telling us is this: By the repetition...and it is *so* much better to start when you're just a little kid, before you can even read them yourself, to learn to memorize passages out of the Bible. They go into your mind; they will *never* come out. That's the way we are designed, with good reason. They will be there, when you face decisions in your life, to tell you when you're doing something *stupid*. (Although

sometimes we are only able to put that together after we have been *shown* to be stupid. But that's another sermon for another day.) Later, in verse 17:

Psalm 119

AKJV

- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live, and keep your word.
¹⁸ Open you my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Wondrous things? Isn't the Law a yoke of bondage? *He* didn't think so. For him, it was a light to his feet, a lamp to the path, so he could see where he was going and not fall down and *hurt himself*. He said:

Psalm 119

AKJV

- ¹⁹ I am a stranger in the earth: hide not your commandments from me.

What does that mean? That means, "I'm going to face a lot of things I've never faced before, and I need a *worldview*—I need a *framework*—into which I can place all this stuff." He says:

Psalm 119

AKJV

- ²¹ You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from your commandments.
²² Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept your testimonies.
²³ Princes also did sit and speak against me: but your servant did meditate in your statutes.
²⁴ Your testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors [*advisors*].

The Law of God was his advisor in difficult times. It was an enormous *value* to him. Notice the difference between the external Old Covenant, imposed on you by some person, and the internal New Covenant which this man had *already found*. It is really remarkable to see the degree to which this happens in a child's life, as well as a grown man. In the 105th verse of this psalm, he makes this *profound* statement:

Psalm 119

AKJV

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Question: Where is the light coming from? Yeah, yeah. But where is the light *coming from*? It's not from the church that walks alongside you. The light comes from inside—from the Law written and engraven in your heart, your mind, and your conscience. *But* you are going to have to work at putting the Law of God *into* your heart and mind or it will never be there, and neither will the light. The same thing is true of your children. Your children can be a part of the New Covenant from the beginning. Just follow this commandment:

Deuteronomy 6

AKJV

- ⁷ And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way[....]

When we talk about the moral collapse of our society, we want to blame it on government, on the schools, on anything except us. But if all parents obeyed this simple commandment, this problem could be turned around in a generation.

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About the New Covenant

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